

97. Surah Al Qadr (Power)

Name

The Surah has been so designated after the word *al-qadr* in the very first verse.

Period of Revelation

Whether it is a Makki or a Madani revelation is disputed. Abu Hayyan in *Al-Bahr al-Muhti* has made the claim that the majority of scholars regard it as a Madani Surah. Ali bin Ahmad al-Wahidi in his commentary says that this is the first Surah to be sent down in Madinah. Contrary to this, Al Mawardi says that according to the majority of scholars it is a Makki revelation, and the same view has Imam Suyuti expressed in *Al-Itqan*. Ibn Mardayah has cited Ibn Abbas, Ibn Az Zubair and Hadrat Aishah as saying that this Surah was revealed at Makkah. A study of the contents also shows that it should have been revealed at Makkah as we shall explain below.

Theme and Subject Matter

Its theme is to acquaint man with the value, worth and importance of the Quran. Its being placed just after Surah Al-Alaq in the arrangement of the Quran by itself explains that the Holy Book, the revelation of which began with the first five verses of Surah Al-Alaq. was sent down in a destiny making night. It is a glorious Book and its revelation for mankind is full of blessings.

At the outset, Allah says: "We have sent it down." That is, it is not a composition of Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessing) himself, but We Ourselves have revealed it.

Then, it is said that "We sent it down in the Night of Destiny." Night of Destiny lies two meanings and both are implied here. First, that it is the night during which destinies are decided; or, in other words, it is not an ordinary night like the other nights, but a night in which destinies are made or marred. The revelation of this Book in this night is not merely the revelation of a book but an event which will change the destiny of not only the Quraish, or of Arabia, but of, the entire world. The same thing has been said in Surah Ad-Dukhan for which please see Introduction to that Surah and E. N. 3 thereof. The other meaning is that this is, a night of unique honor, dignity and glory; so much so that it is better than a thousand months. Thus, the disbelievers of Makkah have been warned, as if to say: "You on account of your ignorance regard this Book, which Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) has presented, as a calamity for yourselves and complain that a disaster has befallen you, whereas the night in which it was decreed to be sent down was such a blessed night that a task was accomplished in it for the well being of mankind, which had never been accomplished even during a thousand months of history. This also has

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been said in verse 3 of Ad-Dukhan in another way, which we have explained in the introduction to that Surah.

In conclusion, it has been stated that in this night the angels and Gabriel descend with every decree (which in verse 4 of Surah Ad- Dukhan has been described as arm-hakim: wise decree) by the leave of their Lord, and it is all peace from evening till morning; that is, there is no interference of evil in it, for all decrees of Allah are intended to promote good and not evil. So much so that even if a decision to destroy a nation is taken, it is taken for the sake of ultimate good, not evil.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ ﴿١﴾

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ ﴿٢﴾

لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ ﴿٣﴾

تَنْزِيلُ الْمَلَكِ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِّن كُلِّ أَمْرٍ ﴿٤﴾

سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَتَّىٰ مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ ﴿٥﴾

[1-5] We have sent down this (Qur'an) in the Night of Glory.¹ And what do you know what the Night of Glory is? The Night of Glory is better than a thousand months.² The angels and the Spirit³ descend in it with every decree, by the permission of their Lord.⁴ That Night is peace, until the rising of the dawn.⁵

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1The words in the original are anzalana hu: "We Ourselves have sent it down". But although there is no mention of the Qur'an before it, the Qur'an is implied, for "sending down" by itself points out that the Qur'an is meant. And there are numerous instances of this in the Qur'an that if from the context, or the style, the antecedent of a pronoun is apparent, the pronoun is used even if the antecedent has not been mentioned anywhere before or after it. (For explanation, see E.N. 9 of An-Najm).

Here, it has been said: "We have sent down the Qur'an in the Night of Destiny", and in Al-Baqarah: 185, "Ramadan is the month in which the Qur'an was sent down. " This shows that the night in which the Angel of God had brought down revelation for the first time to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah's Peace) in the Cave of Hira, was a night of the month of Ramadan. This night has been described as Lailat-ul-qadr here and as Lailat-im-mubarakah in Surah Ad-Dukhan: 3 above.

There can be two meanings of sending down the Qur'an in this night: first, , that in this night the entire Qur'an was entrusted to the bearers (angels) of Revelation, and then Gabriel (peace be on him) continued to reveal its verses and Surahs, from time to time, to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) during 23 years as the occasion and conditions demanded. This meaning has been given by Ibn `Abbas. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Hakim, Ibn Marduyah, Baihaqi). Second, that the revelation of the Qur'an began in this night. This is Imam Sha`bi's view, although from him too the other view also is related, which is the view of Ibn `Abbas as cited above (Ibn Jarir). Anyhow, in both cases, the meaning is the same that the revelation of the Qur'an to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) began in this very night, and this was the night in which the five opening verses of Surah Al-`Alaq were revealed. The fact, however, is that Allah did not compose the verses and the Surahs of the Qur'an right at the time guidance was needed by the Holy Prophet for his message of Islam in respect of an occasion or affair, but even before the creation of the universe, in the very beginning, Allah had a full plan of the creation of mankind on the earth, of raising the Prophets in it, of sending down the Books to the Prophets, of raising the Holy Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace and blessings) at the end of the line of the Prophets and of sending down the Qur'an to him. In the Night of Destiny only the execution of the final phase of the plan began. No wonder if at that very time the entire Qur'an was entrusted to the bearers of Revelation.

Some commentators have interpreted qadr to mean destiny (taqdir) , . i. e it is the night in which Allah entrusts the decrees of destiny to the angels to be enforced. This is supported by verse 3 of Surah Ad-Dukhan: "This is a night in which every matter is decided wisely by Our command." On the contrary, Imam Zuhri says that qadr means glory and honor, thereby implying that it is a Night of Destiny. This meaning is supported by the words "Lailat-ul-qadr is better than a thousand months" of this Surah itself.

As for the question as to which night it was, it is disputed and there are as many as 40 different views on this subject. However, a great majority of scholars hold the opinion that one of the odd nights of the last ten nights of the month of Ramadan is Lailat-ul-qadr, and among these also most scholars think that it is the 27th night. Below we give the authentic Ahadith which have been reported in this connection:

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According to Hadrat Abu Hurairah, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) said, in connection with Lailat-ul qadr, that it is the 27th night. (Abu Da'ud Tayalisi). According to another tradition from Hadrat Abu Hurairah, it is the last night of Ramadan. (Musnad Ahmad).

When Zirr bin Hubaish asked Hadrat Ubayy bin Ka'b about Lailat-ulqadr, he stated on oath, and did not make any exception, that it is the 27th night. (Ahmad, Muslim, Abu Da'ud, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i, Ibn Hibban).

When Hadrat Abu Zarr was asked about it, he said: "Hadrat `Umar, Hadrat Hudhaifah and many other Companions of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had no doubt that it is the 27th night." (Ibn Abi Shaibah).

Hadrat `Ubadah bin as-Samit says that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) said: `Lailat-al-qadr is one of the odd nights of the last ten nights of Ramadan: 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, 29th, or the last night." (Musnad Ahmad).

Hadrat `Abdullah bin 'Abbas says that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) said: "Search for it among the last ten nights of Ramadan when there are still nine days in the month, or seven days, or five days." (bukhari). Most of the scholars have understood it to mean that by this the Holy Prophet meant the odd nights.

Hadrat Abu Bakr said: "When nine days remain in the month, or seven days, or five days, or three days, or the last night." What he meant was that Lailat-ul-qadr should be sought among these dates. (Tirmidhi, Nasa'i).

According to Hadrat 'A'ishah, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) said: "Search for lailat-ul-qadr among the odd nights of the last ten nights of Ramadan. (Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, Tirmidhi). Hadrat 'A'ishah and Hadrat 'Abdullah bin `Umar have also reported that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) observed i'tikaf (seclusion in the Mosque) during the last ten nights of Ramadan every year during his lifetime.

On the basis of the traditions related in this regard on the authority of a great Companions like Hadrat Mu`awiyah, Hadrat Ibn 'Umar, Hadrat Ibn 'Abbas and others, a large number of the earliest scholars regard the 27th of Ramadan as Lailat-ul-qadr. Probably Allah and His Messenger have not specified any one night for the reason so that the people, in their zeal to benefit from the virtues of Lailat-ul-qadr, should spend more and more nights in worship and devotion and should not remain content with only one night. Here the question arises that when it is night at Makkah, it is daytime in a large part of the world; therefore, the people of those parts can never take advantage of Lailat-ul-qadr. The answer is that the word night in Arabic is mostly used for the combination of the day and night. Therefore, the night preceding the day on any one of these dates of Ramadan can be Lailat ul-qadr for that part of the world.

2The commentators in general have understood this to mean that the good acts performed in this Night are superior in value to the good acts of a thousand months in which Lailat-ul-qadr is not included. There is no doubt that this is in itself correct and the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) has described great excellencies and virtues of the good acts and devotions of this Night. According to a tradition related in Bukhari and Muslim, on the authority of Hadrat Abu Hurairah, the Holy Prophet said: The one who remained standing in worship in the state of

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belief and for the sake of rewards from Allah during Lailat-ul-qadr, would have all his previous sins forgiven." And in Musnad Ahmad, there is a tradition from Hadrat `Ubadah bin as-Samit, saying that the Holy Prophet said: Lailat-ut-qadr is. Among the last ten nights of Ramadan. The one who stood up in worship in order to take advantage of their rewards, Allah wilt forgive all his former and latter sins." But, the verse does not say: "To act righteously in Lailat-ul-qadr is better than acting righteously in a thousand months, " but it says: lailat-ul-qadr is better than a thousand months. " And "a thousand months" also does not imply 83 years and 4 months exactly, but a very long period of time as "a thousand" denoted among the Arabs. Therefore, the verse means that in this one night a task was accomplished for the welfare of mankind the like of which had not been accomplished even during an indefinitely long period of history.

3"The Spirit": Gabriel (peace be on him), who has been mentioned separately from the angels in view of his unique eminence, honor and merit.

4That is, they do not descend of their own accord but by leave of their Lord, and "every decree" implies amr hakim (a wise decree) as described in Ad-Dukhan: 5.

5That is, the entire Night, from evening till morning, is peace, free from every evil and mischief.